

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

**OLD DAYS OF THE AMERICAN STAGE.**  
DRAMATIC LIFE AS I FOUND IT. A Record of Personal Experiences with an Author, a Playwright and Producer, and Biographical Sketches of the Principal Actors and Actresses Who Have at Times Appeared upon the Stage in the Mississippi Valley. By N. M. Ludlow, Actor and Manager for Sixty Years. Svo. pp. 733. St. Louis: G. J. Jones & Co.

The stage, as an object of almost universal public attention, has, within the past ten years, assumed great prominence, and one of the many current signs of its advancement in practical publicity is the widespread tendency now visible toward commemorating it in books. Among the most recent works which this tendency has evoked is a partly volume entitled "Dramatic Life As I Found It," by N. M. Ludlow. It is at once autobiography and history. Mr. Ludlow went on the stage in 1815, and left it in 1853, and in this work he has recounted his personal experiences as an actor and a manager. The scenes of those experiences were the theatre of the West and Southwest—a region in which, for a time, the Museus met with anything but ease and comfort, and in which, accordingly, an actor's life was long a series of hardships. The late Sol Smith, in his recollections of "Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years"—published in 1868, by Messrs. Harper & Brothers—gave the earliest ample account that we possess of the strange and often comic or pathetic vicissitudes of theatrical life in that part of our country. Mr. Ludlow—once his partner, now his severe critic—traverses much the same ground, and writes in a kindred vein. His style is somewhat diffuse and ragged—the style of a man apparently unused to literary composition, and certainly deficient of the sense of art in the use of words and of proportion in the choice and treatment of subjects—and his narrative is heavily weighted with many trivial details and some ponderous platitudes of moral reflection; yet his book is, to some extent, entertaining and useful—for its pages are sprinkled, here and there, with odd little incidents and anecdotes, and his record suggests an instructive picture of the growth of the stage, as a popular institution, amidst the many adverse elements of a rude civilization. In England, in old times, the players were despised on various grounds of inferiority. In the wilder parts of America it was their lot, for a time, to be neglected as useless. Mr. Ludlow's account, harmonizing, as to this point, with those of Smith and Wemyss, serves to show in what manner the stage has proved its necessity, justified its existence, won its place, and advanced and augmented its rank and power.

Mr. Ludlow was born in Whitehall-st., New-York, in 1795, and removed to Albany in 1813. He remembers the War of 1812, and he records that he narrowly missed becoming a midshipman in the United States service. While yet a boy he evinced a fondness for the stage—stimulated by the sight of performances at the old Park Theatre in the days of Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Darley, and George Frederick Cooke. He joined, in 1815, a dramatic company then organized by Samuel Drake, stage-manager for John Bernard of Albany—and set forth into the West. The journeys of actors in our time are often made in palaces; Mr. Ludlow and his companions travelled by road-wagons, ox-trains and flat-boats; and he records that, in going from Olean to Pittsburg they, more than once, had to take precautions against an attack of wolves. The contrast between the state of theatrical life in the first and last quarters of this century could not well be made more significant than it is by such incidents as these. Mr. Ludlow acted in Pittsburg when that city contained fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, and in Mobile when its population was less than 7,000, and his company gave [December 24, 1817] the first dramatic performance in the English language that ever was given in the city of New-Orleans. Voyages down the Alleghany, the Cumberland, the Ohio, and the Mississippi rivers are described in much detail, and the author is shown in the management of theatres in Cincinnati, Nashville, St. Louis, Louisville, Mobile, New-Orleans, and other places. In Nashville in 1818 Mr. Ludlow acted as manager of an amateur theatrical company, formed by divers young gentlemen of that city. One of them was Sam Houston, afterwards Governor of Texas.

After I had cast the pieces and put them up in the common room (writing room), Lieutenant Houston walked in, and looking over the cast, where it had been placed for the notice of the members of the guild, while he came to the farce, he said to me, "Mr. Ludlow, my boy, you have got me a good company." After I had seen him off, nor had he known where. After one night's performance Mr. Booth returned to Richmond, finished his engagement there, and then came back to Petersburg, where he had a seat in the audience, myself included; and it seemed to me that no greater actor would pass through these two seats with that carefree indifference that Mr. Booth exhibited. That from that on his acting was unique and wonderful! I had never seen any one produce such effects, and with such facility, as he did. And when I first saw Mr. Booth, who was as before Mr. Booth in the last two acts as he was above him in the first three. When the curtain fell upon the finishing of the play, there was a burst of applause from the audience and actors, as if it were a Peter-Pan.

After the curtain fell, Mr. Booth, who had been seated in the front row, got up and went to the door.

"I request Lieutenant, I am about to test the veracity of your guess; that character is a very fine but of low comedy—short, but ill-fitted to grand, and ill-fitted to tragic; and, therefore, I am afraid, would not fit in with the rest of the company."

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